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TAGS: [AORC](#) [PREL](#) [KNNP](#) [IAEA](#) [EG](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: IAEA/GC: ARAB GROUP APPEALS TO OBAMA ADMINISTRATION

REF: A) UNVIE 326 B) UNVIE 333 C) 2008 UNVIE 546

Classified By: CDA Geoffrey R. Pyatt for reasons 1.4 b and d

11. (C) A coterie of Vienna Arab Group Ambassadors (Lebanon, Egypt, Morocco and the Palestinian Authority) and the local Arab League (AL) representative appealed directly to Charge July 16 for U.S. support, or at least "understanding," of their draft IAEA General Conference resolution on "Israeli Nuclear Capabilities" (INC). They shared the Arab League text (adopted by the Council of Ministers), which we had already received via other channels and transmitted to the Department. In addition to making the usual arguments about the revised resolution being factual, benign and non-inflammatory, given that the word "threat" was dropped from the title last year, and no different from other UN resolutions on the subject, the Arab Group/AL hoped that the promise of "change" on the part of the Obama Administration would be reflected in our approach to this issue in Vienna. The only change in the INC resolution from last year was inclusion of a preambular reference to initiatives for a nuclear weapons free world, which, the AL ambassadors said, referred principally to President Obama's speech in Prague. The Arab Group/AL stressed dialogue rather than confrontation in the GC and sought to avoid another "no action motion," which they criticized as an undemocratic cut-off of debate on a substantive issue that went to the heart of their NPT adherence. Lebanese Ambassador El-Khoury claimed that the U.S. could not count on EU support for "no action," as several EU countries were on "their side." Egypt noted that even if we were to block the resolution again this year, the issue would be back again to haunt us next year.

12. (C) Charge assured the Arab Group of our desire for consensus rather than confrontation, i.e., that we would prefer not to resort to parliamentary tactics and would not stand in the way of a fulsome discussion. He acknowledged that the issue the Arab Group raises with its resolution cannot be wished away but should be "managed" in a way that respects all of our principles. Charge underlined the centrality of nonproliferation, NPT universality and multilateral cooperation to the Obama Administration. He counseled a holistic approach to nonproliferation in the Middle East, noting the important concerns of all our governments regarding Iran's program, but the Arab Group representatives rejected any conflation of Israel and Iran nuclear issues. They recalled how Arab Board members had supported Iran's referral to the UNSC in 2006. The issue was

not one of condoning Iran's actions, the Egyptian DCM argued, but of condoning Israel's position by omission, and though he professed to understand our reluctance to hold Israel accountable (i.e. for its nuclear arsenal), this bred resentment among those in the Arab world who regret not having nuclear weapons. Egyptian Ambassador Fawzi also compared the INC to the annual GC resolution on DPRK, intimating that the same rationale applied to both and that the DPRK resolution could be held hostage to the INC debate. Fawzi and other Arab Group Ambassadors defended their "right" to bring the INC to a vote.

13. (C) Egypt's active participation in the meeting was particularly notable, as was Syria's absence. Underlining that he was uninstructed and had no answers, Charge observed that the introduction of two related resolutions, the one on Middle East Safeguards (MES) and that on INC, had resulted in frustration and "no winners" in the past, and he posited that our respective interests in the Agency could be served by adopting a different framework. Without making any commitments as to the Egyptian text, Fawzi asked pointedly, if Egypt did not introduce its MES resolution this year, what would the U.S. position be "for the sake of consensus" on the INC? Charge declined to speculate on a U.S. position on the hypothetical question of a stand-alone INC resolution in the absence of instructions, but undertook to put the question to Washington for consideration. (Comment: This may not have been just posturing on Fawzi's part. The fact that Egypt appears to be playing, for the first time in recent years, a negotiating role on the part of the Arab Group/AL, and has not circulated an MES text this year may signal a tactical shift to lead with the INC. Egypt and other Arab group members noted their strong objections to Israeli amendments to the 2008 MES resolution, in particular with respect to the precedence of the peace process as prerequisite for a NWFZ. Charge cited the vote on last year's amendment as evidence that many governments share the U.S. view on the relationship between the peace process and a MENWFZ. "Where is this peace process you talk about?", the Egyptian Ambassador interjected, "I don't see it." Still scathed from last year, Egypt could decide to not submit its MES text and revert to the situation prior to introduction of the Egyptian MES resolution in the mid-1990s with the INC being the only resolution on the table. Another Egyptian ploy might be to let a confrontation unfold over the INC (as Egypt would expect strong opposition to INC), and then re-introduce as a "compromise" the MES resolution without the Israeli amendments adopted in 2008. End Comment.)

14. (C) Comment Contd.: While their tactics may be evolving, the Arab Group appeal for U.S. leadership and cooperation is similar to previous years. However, Egypt's participation in the meeting on the INC resolution is a departure from previous years in which Cairo postured itself at arms-length from the AL-led text; Egypt's involvement at this stage underlies our speculation that Cairo is adjusting its tactics vis--vis the ordering and linkage of texts. The Arabs had not yet met with the EU, Canada or others, despite Canadian overtures to the AL in Cairo. End Comment.

15. (C) We learned in a separate July 14 brainstorming session with like-minded experts (Canada, U.S., EU, UK, and New Zealand) that Arab League SYG Moussa had written individually to EU members on the INC, and the EU Presidency is seeking to coordinate a response. The UK confirmed our expectation that while they may revert "by default" to a common position on a "no action" motion, EU states would likely splinter on an up-or-down vote on the INC. The Swedish EU Presidency reported that in preliminary discussions, EU Ambassadors had accorded the Presidency broad negotiating authority and were inclined to treat the MES and INC resolutions separately and on their "own merits," an approach we and Canada discouraged if there was to be any prospect of a new consensus "package." Canada saw no prospect for revival of the old consensus and expected to receive similar instructions this year as it did last -- to call for "no action" provided there was a reasonable chance for success -- but believed chances were "unreasonable" and will so advise Ottawa. UK assessed that

there was no chance of winning a "no action" motion even with EU support. Albeit also uninstructed, Canada strongly encouraged the notion of a possible consensus approach based on a single resolution, calling this exactly the kind of "new think" that was warranted. Canada noted that the substantive convergence between the MES (now more about a NWFZ than safeguards) and INC texts over the years supported the logic of a single resolution. U.K. and EU counterparts were also enthused and the U.K. recommended a direct U.S. approach in Cairo. We underlined the need for a united front in Vienna among the likeminded and they encouraged the U.S. to take the pen on a single resolution. Everyone recognized that this may or may not work, and would depend on the Arab end-game with respect to the NPT Revcon (which is not clear), but we agreed it was worth trying even for tactical reasons to demonstrate our flexibility vis--vis the Arab Group. Like-minded experts also speculated about rumors of an Iranian-introduced agenda item on Israeli strikes against nuclear facilities, but judging from our discussion with the Arab League Ambassadors (who did not mention it), there is no evidence of appetite among the Arabs for aligning with Iran on that suggestion.

16. (C) Guidance Request: From our soundings thus far in Vienna, a new consensus premised on a single resolution (ref a) seems to be our best option for attempting to identify a new framework for dealing with the Middle East that avoids another GC showdown. We may very well lose such a showdown this year (the "no action" vote), and we hope to avoid burdening the new Board after the General Conference with the acrimonious tone of what is invariably the final issue dealt with at the GC. Before pursuing a single resolution approach, including with Israeli counterparts, Mission will wait for guidance, as requested ref a. Egypt's renewed re-engagement in the Arab League, after taking a hands-off approach and rejecting "linkage" the last few years, could be turned to our advantage should Washington deem a new initiative for a single resolution text worth pursuing, including via high-level bilateral approaches in Cairo as suggested ref a. Charge is scheduled to see Swedish Ambassador (EU Presidency) on Tuesday, July 21 and would benefit from initial Washington guidance also for that conversation.

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